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# Letters To The Editor

## On the Operations Research Committee Report and the ABM Debate

Joseph Alsop's column of November 8 for the most part accurately reflects the findings and tone of the recent critique by the Operations Research Society of America of the role of myself and others in the ABM debate. What Mr. Alsop failed to appreciate or convey to his readers was the fact that the ORSA report is a technically incompetent critique—based on bizarre procedural arrangements, selective use of evidence, and remarkably uncritical acceptance of administration assumptions, many of which had little or no foundation in fact.

This is not the place to discuss all of the deficiencies of the ORSA report—we have done that in some detail elsewhere—but lest readers be misled by Mr. Alsop's column it is perhaps useful to comment on two issues in the ABM debate: the possible vulnerability of the U.S. Minuteman force to a Soviet SS-9 "first strike" in the mid-70's, and whether the Safeguard ABM deployment would make a significant difference in Minuteman survivability.

Although the second question was really what the ABM debate was all about, ORSA focused its attention almost exclusively on the first, a hardly surprising fact since Albert Wohlstetter who instigated the inquiry, and whose lead it slavishly followed, had largely avoided commenting on Safeguard's utility in both his testimony and his specification of changes.

As regards Minuteman vulnerability, I would point out that estimates necessarily had to be based on interpretation of intelligence information and technical judgment of what the situation would be six years later. Various participants in the debate made quite different judgments, and such differences, not mathematical manipulation which was essentially trivial, nor the application of esoteric operations research techniques, accounted for my estimating that 25 per cent of the Minuteman force would survive while Mr. Wohlstetter and Defense Department spokesmen estimated 5 per cent. I leave it to the reader to draw his own conclusion as to whose judgments were more reasonable, pointing out that I would now revise my estimates of Minuteman survivability upward as it now seems even less likely than it did two years ago that the U.S.S.R. could fully equip its SS-9 force with highly

effective multiple independently targetable reentry vehicles (MIRVs) by the mid-70's. Reports such as those by Michael Gettler of a by himself or by ORSA from participating in recent DOD/CIA sponsored study by TRW (The Washington Post, June 17), General Ryan's March 9 testimony before the House Appropriations Committee, and Secretary Packard's remarks of October 21 lead me to believe that the administration too might now estimate very substantial survivability.

The administration seems also to have largely come around to the views of its opponents with regard to the question of Safeguard effectiveness. Thus, it is now recognized, even in the Defense Department, that the missile site radar is the Achilles' heel of Safeguard, and there are serious efforts under way to design a dedicated hard-site defense employing less expensive radars as many of us recommended. And it is now considered, as we had suggested, that Safeguard as originally planned will be an inadequate defense if a build-up in Soviet missile capabilities continues, whereas originally it was argued that it was needed in case of such a build-up.

Mr. Alsop points out that we admitted mistakes. A single example will perhaps put that admission in perspective. I had argued that Messrs. Laird, John Foster and Wohlstetter had made unrealistic assumption in imputing to the Soviet Union the capability, in executing an attack against us, of compensating for all their missile failures by replacing the failures with other warheads aimed at the same targets. In fact, Mr. Wohlstetter had, unlike Messrs. Laird and Foster, apparently assumed that 15 per cent of the failures could not be so replaced. I was in error and was criticized by ORSA for the mistake. It is to be noted that neither Mr. Wohlstetter nor the Defense spokesmen offered any analysis to support their contention that such tactics were feasible. Yet, the ORSA committee did not criticize this omission. Rather, it attempted the back-up analysis for them, in so doing finding it necessary to use assumptions about Soviet MIRV technology totally at variance with observations!

Finally, Mr. Alsop alleges that I charged Howard Berger, one of the ORSA committee, with harboring personal animus against me; that Dr. Berger has claimed I was guilty of prevarication in making such a charge; and that there is solid evidence to that effect. I made no such charge and challenge Mr. Alsop and Dr. Berger to produce evidence that I did, much less evidence that I lied in making it! What I and my colleagues did suggest was that since Dr. Berger had previously

by himself or by ORSA from participating in the inquiry. In suggesting this, we were not General charging animus on his part, but rather lack of sensitivity and appreciation of reasonable professional and ethical norms by him and ORSA, a charge which the style of the ORSA

As has been the case with so many of his columns, Mr. Alsop has again regrettably elected to accept uncritically those arguments consistent with his deep-seated biases rather than to attempt to understand and elucidate the issues involved in a complex question—in this case, those relating to the Safeguard deployment question.

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In September 1971, an Ad Hoc Committee of the Operations Research Society of America (ORSA) issued a report censuring, as not being up to the standards of the Society, the congressional testimonies in opposition to the Safeguard ABM system of Dr. Jerome Wiesner, president of MIT; Drs. George Rathjens and Steven Weinberg, professors at MIT, and to a lesser extent, Professor Wolfgang Panofsky, Stanford University. Predictably, this was put in the Congressional Record by Senator Jackson, the strong proponent of Safeguard in the Congress. On October 13th, Donald Rumsfeld, Counselor to the President, wrote from the White House a letter to Robert Machol, president of ORSA, stating that the report had been discussed personally with President Nixon, that Admiral Zumwalt, Chief of Naval Operations, discussed the work in a most favorable way, and that "you and the Society have performed a magnificent service." To cap it off, on November 8th, in a column which you carried, the columnist, Joseph Alsop, extolled the report and decried the dishonesty of the opponents of Safeguard.

Just to keep the record straight, we think it should be known that five members of the ORSA Council issued a minority report questioning the propriety, impartiality, and ability of the Ad Hoc Committee to carry out such an investigation. This minority report was not mentioned by Senator Jackson and others. More importantly, this unprecedented investigation was carried out at the request of Professor Albert Wohlstetter, the leading non-governmental protagonist for Safeguard, confidant of Senator Jackson, and consultant to Admiral Zumwalt. Profes-

sor Wohlstetter was on the report, is a member of ORSA; the other witnesses who were censured are not members and did not participate in the work of the Committee.

Although the primary purpose of the congressional hearings was to determine the need for Safeguard, and whether, indeed, it would work, the ORSA Committee study never even addressed the testimony on these central issues, but instead concentrated its attention on several sub-issues such as (1) the vulnerability of our Minuteman deterrent to an administration postulated Soviet threat, and (2) the Soviet ability to destroy both our Minuteman missiles and bombers in a simultaneous attack. These sub-issues were suggested to ORSA by Professor Wohlstetter, one of the protagonists in the debate whose standards the ORSA Committee was, in theory, investigating. This action by the Committee would appear highly unethical, and the ORSA Council's sensitivity to such a charge is demonstrated by the fact that it excised from its published version of Professor Wohlstetter's letter those portions directing their attention to these sub-issues.

We think everyone should ask whether a group which employs such standards in its investigations has demonstrated the competence to evaluate the standards of such eminent scientists with a record of dedication to public service as Drs. Wiesner, Rathjens, Weinberg and Panofsky. We think one must conclude that the ORSA Ad Hoc Committee—and those Council members who endorsed the report—have just become additional protagonists in the continuing ABM debate along with Professor Wohlstetter, Senator Jackson, the White House and Joe Alsop.

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